

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-5, 10 and 13-33 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 34 to 58 have been added. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been introduced into the present application by the addition of the new claims. Reconsideration of the present application is requested in view of the following remarks.

The rejection of claims 1-2, 17, 18, 26 and 30 under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, and the objection to claim 33, are respectfully traversed. However, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection and the objection have been rendered moot by the cancellation of these claims.

The rejection of claims 1-5, 10 and 13-33 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ruest et al. (US 4,524,077) in view of Grendel et al. (US 5,498,790) and Kawabe et al. (US 5,763,652), is respectfully traversed for the reasons set forth below.

The Ruest reference teaches a process for the production of HMTBA. The patent teaches that the hydrolyzate solution is preferably neutralized with anhydrous ammonia (column 6, lines 23-30) and that excessive dilution of the hydrolyzate with water is to be avoided (column 6, lines 50 -68) to prevent the formation of undesirable salts such as ammonium sulfate (which is the desired salt in the process of the present invention). The process of the present invention intentionally uses aqueous ammonia


in order to encourage the formation of salts such as ammonium sulfate so that these salts can be recovered and put to use. In addition, the Ruest reference achieves separation of the HMTBA by adding an organic solvent directly to the neutralized hydrolysate mixture and then separating the resulting organic phase containing HMTBA from the aqueous phase containing salts and recovering the HMTBA by evaporating the organic solvent from the organic phase. In contrast, in the method of the present invention, the neutralized hydrolysate mixture is first separated into two phases, an organic phase containing HMTBA, water and salts and an aqueous phase containing HMTBA, water and salts, before each of the phases is contacted with an organic solvent to extract the HMTBA. The Ruest reference does not disclose or suggest separating the neutralized hydrolysate mixture into an organic phase and an aqueous phase before each phase is contacted with an organic solvent. Further, the secondary references also do not disclose or suggest this preliminary separation step.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the method of the present claims is not disclosed or suggested by the cited references.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the present claims are in allowable condition over the prior art of record.

Reconsideration of the present application and a favorable action concerning claims 34 to 58 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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